FOURTH REPORT OF THE AGENT-GENERAL, LONDON.

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(*To 31st December, 1905.*)

Office of the Agent-General for British Columbia,
Salisbury House, Finsbury Circus, E. C.,
London, 19th January, 1906.

The Hon. Richard McBride, M. P. P.,
Premier of British Columbia, Victoria, B. C.:

Sir,—The knowledge respecting British Columbia which is now steadily growing in the Motherland is resulting in an increased interest being taken by the people here in the progress of that Province, as is shown by the large number of callers at the office for information, with a view to enabling them to decide as to making the Province their future home, and also by the very large correspondence on the same subject with the same object in view. In addition to this steady stream, during the past year there has been a large number of British Columbian visitors, and amongst them the Hon. Minister of Finance and Agriculture and the Hon. Attorney-General, so that the work of the office is now thoroughly known to them. As in 1904, the majority of these callers and correspondents who are going out to the Province, or are arranging to do so at an early date, intend to take up agricultural pursuits, that of fruit-growing or dairying being particularly attractive. They are almost all possessed of capital, varying from £100 up to several thousands, and many have some knowledge of the industry they propose to follow, and a considerable number of them are experienced agriculturists.

There have been a good many inquiries from mechanics and from agricultural labourers, but under the information I have from the Province with respect to its labour requirements, I have not generally been able to advise may of these to go out, unless they were possessed of money enough to keep themselves for some time in the event of not finding employment readily.

Book-keepers and Clerks.

There are always a large number of these who would like to emigrate, but in most cases I have given no encouragement, as the cost of the journey would nearly exhaust their money.

Fisheries.

Many English and Scotch fishermen have had their attention turned to the Pacific Coast as a desirable location for them, and early in the year efforts were made by some parties (connected with large fishing firms) to form a Company for the development of deep-sea fishing extensively on the north-west coast. Action was, however, deferred, owing to the desirability of obtaining fuller information concerning the conditions in relation to the industry in the Province, and when it became known that the Dominion Government had arranged for an experienced man to visit the Coast in order to give a full report on the fisheries, the parties above referred to awaited its appearance. This report is now eagerly looked for, and in expectation of its proving satisfactory, preliminary arrangements are being made with a view to organising a strong company, the intention being to send out several steam trawlers with complete appliances. Representatives of this proposed company called at the office recently and went very carefully into the matter. They are now only deferring operations until they receive the report of Mr. Cowie and have an interview with him.

Mining.

The inquiries respecting mining and mining employment have been more numerous than in 1904, and there is evidently a better feeling prevailing in Britain with respect to this industy in British Columbia; but the office has not possessed much up-to-date information respecting the work of the mines in the Province. The large and admirably compiled mining report is not satisfactory to the general class of inquirers, though very valuable to mining companies, libraries and institutes as a work of reference; but the public want information up-to-date and look to this office for it. A few lines appeared recently in several of the London papers, purporting to be from Ottawa, and stating that the output of minerals in 1905 was

£4,200,000, an increase of £400,000 over the previous year; but this notice does not appear to be official, and, consequently, is of little interest to those who want authentic information on this important subject.

Considerable correspondence has taken place in reference to black sand. An influential firm of ore-buyers, assayers and smelters, who work for the Bank of England, state that they have a process of extracting the gold from this sand, and that if it is nearly equal to the samples sent from British Columbia for the Paris Exhibition, they are confident that it would pay well. They are willing to assay free any samples that may be sent them—on condition, however, that the samples should represent a considerable quantity of the sand. Correspondence also has taken place respecting molybdenite and platinum; this has been forwarded to the Mining Department.

TIMBER.

The timber business of the Province is still much discussed, and it is considered that the British Columbian mills ought to be able to supply a considerable part of the blocks for street-paving, the use of which is so rapidly increasing in all the cities and towns of the land. I am informed that the hard Australian wood, that has been extensively used for paving, is not proving satisfactory, as it splinters under the traffic and becomes very rough. On the other hand, what is known as gum wood, said to be from the States, is too soft, so paving contractors are reverting to Baltic timber as the most satisfactory. Builders and others visiting this office state that they are confident that British Columbia fir, spruce, pine, cedar, etc., would find a good sale here, but it is difficult to be got. They aver that the large building concerns employ buying agents, and that these agents receive commissions from Baltic firms, and give orders in that direction.

It is much to be regretted that the great Pulp Company formed early in 1905 failed to get support, owing largely to adverse reports from British Columbia, which had the effect of deterring the public from subscribing; in consequence of which the underwriters, who had guaranteed about £200,000 (finding there was practically no subscription), looked out for a way to escape liability, and detecting a flaw in the proceedings, they were enabled to effect this. I am informed, however, that the company is still going on satisfactorily, and intend to carry out their works on the original plan.

FRUIT.

The shipment of fruit made by the Government to be exhibited at the show of the Royal Horticultural Society, and for sale in order to test the markets, was under the able management of Mr. R. M. Palmer, and was a great success, both in proving at the show the splendid quality of the fruit and its suitability for this market, and also demonstrating the agricultural capabilities of the Province and the excellence of its climate. Mr. R. M. Palmer, however, will fully report on this subject, but I may add that when I first suggested to the Government to make a show of British Columbian fruit in London, it was in order to demonstrate in a practical way the Province was not only rich in mines, timber and fish, which were becoming fully known, but also possessed great advantages for the agriculturists; and the result has fully proved this. The Province has won three gold and nine silver medals in the greatest fruit market in the world, and the success of the individual exhibitors must prove highly satisfactory to them, as the capable fruit-growers of British Columbia, who made so admirable a show and won the following medals:—

J. C. Gartrell, Trout Creek, Silver Knightsian Gilt Medal.
T. W. Stirling, Kelowna, " "
Coldstream Estate, Vernon, " "
J. R. Brown, Summerland, Silver Knightsian Medal.
T. G. Earl, Lytton, " "
Mrs. J. Smith, Spence's Bridge, " "
Kootenay Fruit-Growers' Association, Silver Banksian Medal.
J. L. Pridham, Kelowna, "

VARIOUS MATTERS.

The office is greatly in want of an authentic condensed general pamphlet of the Province, illustrated but got up cheaply, something in the form of that so largely distributed by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company and of which that Company has hitherto supplied us with

a great number, but they are now out of print. Our high-class publications are two expensive to distribute freely to the many hundreds of applicants who want information; these of cheaper form are required not only by the callers at the office but also for distribution in quantities to the Dominion Agencies and railway and shipping offices throughout the land, and also for the many lecturers in various parts of the country with whom this office is constantly in correspondence, and to whom slides are lent for exhibition on the screens. I may add that the pamphlets distributed by the Dominion Emigration Office, as a rule, give scarcely any information about British Columbia.

During the past year I have spoken on the Province or given lectures at the Caxton Hall on the 26th of January, 1905; at the Royal Horticultural Society, 28th February, 1905; at the Royal Society of St.George, May 11th, 1905; at the Sphinx Club, 4th October, 1905; at the Royal Polytechnic, Borough, November 14th, 1905; at the Canadian Society Criterion, 16th November, 1905, and at various other places; and I am now preparing a lecture to be given at Edinburgh on the 24th inst. During the same period there has been received at the office 4,320 letters; there have been sent out 4,000 letters, 1,750 postal packages, containing one to ten pamphlets, and a very large number of freight and express parcels, containing in all about 20,000 pamphlets. The number of callers in the year in reference to going out to the Province was about 3,500. We know that several hundred of these have gone out to settle in British Columbia, but it is impossible to state definitely the number. All of them have been exceedingly good class for settling in the Province, and they almost all have capital.

I have the honour to remain,
Your obedient servant,
J. H. TURNER,
Agent-General for British Columbia

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